

ing a unique habitat for these Bobucks and other native creatures.

Additional images of animals so far recorded in this survey may be viewed at the following website: http://www.thylacoleo.com/news/oct_dec2005/oct_dec2005.html

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References

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Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Country

by Chris Tzaros

Publisher: *CSIRO Publishing, 2005. 256 pages, paperback and CD; colour photographs. ISBN 0643069674. RRP \$39.95*

Local and regional natural history and field guides are a useful starting point for learning about an area that is new, especially when written by someone such as Chris Tzaros, with a deep knowledge and love for the region being described. The author writes in the preface to *Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Country*, 'I hope that this book will be used by many people, not only workers or students in the field of land and wildlife management, community extension or regional planning, but also landholders, naturalists, tourists, and anyone who may simply wish to learn more about the wildlife of Victoria's wonderful box-ironbark country'. I think he has succeeded; there is something in this book for everyone. This book would be especially useful for newcomers to the Box-Ironbark, such as landholders and research students who are unfamiliar with the region.

Over the past 200 years, Victoria's Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands have been so heavily cleared and modified for timber, mining and farming that now only about 15% remains, mostly in isolated remnants or as corridors along roadsides. Although there are some larger remnants, such as Warby Range State Park (11 084 ha), most

of the remaining Box-Ironbark remnants are tiny, degraded fragments. Take a look at the maps of the 16 Box-Ironbark parks and conservation areas in this book and you will see that many, although seemingly large, are really only smaller areas cobbled together, many with long, ragged edges. It is sobering to note that there is only one very small patch of Box-Ironbark remaining that matches the official criterion of undisturbed and uncut 'old-growth' woodland.

What is left of the Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands provides critical habitat for a large number of woodland plants and animals, now threatened because of destruction of their habitat. Many species, such as the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Squirrel Glider and Brush-tailed Phascogale, are dependent on the remnants that remain.

The first three chapters provide an excellent summary of the Box-Ironbark region, its history and its wildlife. The natural distribution of Box-Ironbark species, why the region has such a diversity of species and how they have been affected by the habitat destruction and modification of the past 200 years are covered. A succinct summary points out how current land-uses and

processes and the loss of certain habitat features, such as tree hollows, ground-layer (leaf litter and fallen timber) and mature trees, has contributed to the decline of species in this region.

'Box-Ironbark habitats' is my favourite chapter and is an excellent introduction to Box-Ironbark floristics. The author has grouped the 25 floristic communities of the Box-Ironbark region (Muir *et al.* 1995) into six broad habitat types, for example 'Granitic hills woodlands and shrublands'. A full page is devoted to each habitat type, and the plant species which make up the overstorey, understorey and ground-layer, as well as the characteristic fauna found in each habitat type, are described. Plant species referred to in the descriptions are also listed at the back of the book (p 232). The author has wisely not included species descriptions or illustrations of individual plants in this book as they have been adequately covered in other publications such as *Victoria's Box-Ironbark Country: A Field Guide* (Calder and Calder 2002). You can also refer to specialist floristic publications such as Costermans (1992) and Corriek and Fuhrer (undated) to look up plants mentioned in the book.

In the 'field guide' section (Chapter 4), there is a description, colour photograph and distribution map for each species of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian. The distribution maps, compiled from records in the *Atlas of Victorian Wildlife* database, contain a lot of information—the species distribution within the Box-Ironbark region and throughout Victoria, and the distribution records before and after 1970. The Growling Grass Frog map on page 182 is of particular concern as it indicates how quickly the populations of this animal have declined. The maps tell a similar story for many other species. I recommend that you read the section 'Interpreting the species maps' on page 11 carefully, as there is much more information to be gleaned from the maps than I initially realised. The only quibble I have with the species accounts maps is that the green and red dots showing the 'before 1970' and 'since 1970' time periods are very tiny and my failing eyesight made it very difficult to interpret some of the detail without the aid of a magnifier. Each species account also describes

range and status, habitat, habits (which can be very useful for identifying unfamiliar species) and suggestions for locations where you can observe the animal.

Detailed maps of the locations mentioned in the species accounts are provided in Chapter 5, 'Where to watch wildlife'. Sixteen maps of parks and reserves give details of the characteristic flora and fauna and information about park facilities such as camping, toilets and water, and the nearest accommodation. There are also notes on the biodiversity values of the park, species that can be observed and a habitat description.

Unfortunately the numbers on the main map on pages 184-185 do not correspond to the numbers allocated to the wildlife viewing sites in the key, but this mistake has been corrected on the CSIRO website (www.publish.csiro.au/pid/4856.htm) and a corrected PDF map can be downloaded via a link from this site.

Towards the back of the book (p 225) there is a checklist of Box-Ironbark wildlife, with a box for 'tickers' to mark off sightings. Other features are a glossary, extra reading list and CD tucked into the back cover titled 'Box-Ironbark nature soundscape'. Over 85 species of bird, frog and mammal star in this recording. Field notes (p 243) provide a guide to the songs and calls on each track.

A more comprehensive index would enhance the value of the book. Species accounts are indexed, but there is plenty of other useful information that could be included, for example the interesting map on p 18 showing how the Grey-crowned Babbler has declined over the past 30 years, the Noisy Miner as a problem native species on p 35 and conserving the Brush-tailed Phascogale on p 30. Other examples are the text boxes describing the Swift Parrot recovery effort and the Lurg Hills Regent Honeyeater project. The wildlife viewing areas (parks and reserves) and the Box-Ironbark habitat types would also be useful additions to the index.

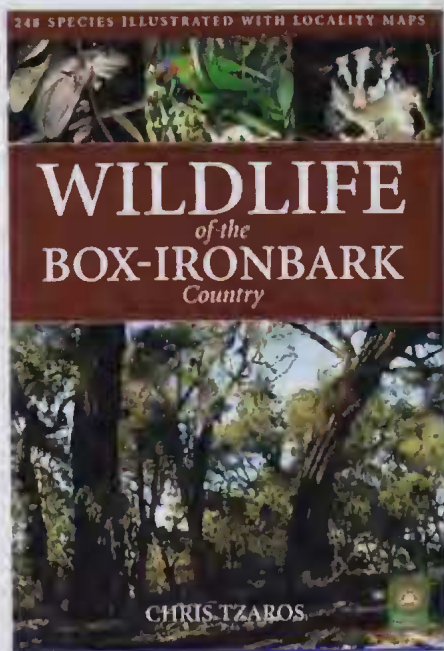
Outstanding photography, particularly of birds, is a highlight. (The most delightful photo in the book is that of the Dusky Woodswallows on pages 56-57.) There are a few photos that are not up to the general standard but this is understandable as they

are of nocturnal animals which are particularly difficult to photograph. Some photos are repeated in the book, for example the Crested Shrike-tit (pp 10 and 135) and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (pp 54 and 142). Perhaps the space could have been better filled with more views of the different Box-Ironbark habitat types.

The few criticisms I have mentioned are all of a minor nature and do not detract from the book's usefulness. I recommend *Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Country* to all who have a love of, or an interest in, the Box-Ironbark. Whether you are an experienced Box-Ironbark observer or a new chum to the region, you will learn something from this book. The CD from the back pocket is now in the stacker in my car so I can test myself on bird calls while going about my work, and the book now forms a valued addition to my 'car boot library' for use on future field trips.

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The nature of plants: habitats, challenges and adaptations

by John Dawson and Rob Lucas

Publisher: CSIRO Publishing, 2005. 314 pages, hardcover, colour photographs;
ISBN 0643091610. RRP \$64.95

The first thing that strikes a person regarding this fascinating book is the excellent quality of the colour photographs, depicting such diverse plants, associated animals and habitats as:

- the tussock grass alpine landscape of Fiordland National Park, New Zealand,
- an outcrop of ultramafic rock with scattered, stunted pines and chaparral shrubs in the Coast Ranges of California,
- a 'giant daisy' on Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania,

- a baobab from Madagascar,
- Australian staghorn ferns,
- a grove of *Araucaria columnaris* on New Caledonia,
- a cabbage tree moth camouflaged on a dead leaf of a cabbage
- a purimoth with a wing span of 15 cm
- the massive fronds of bull kelp, *Durvillea antarctica*
- and much, much more.

The photographs clearly depict and enhance the accompanying text which is